

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 0362

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, EAID, PDEV, BG
SUBJ: BDG REQUEST FOR SURPLUS LST'S

REFS: ;A) DACCA 0078; (B) STATE 008345

1. NURUL HUQ, BDG PJESIDENTIAL ADVISOR (MINISTER) FOR PORTS, SHIPPING AND INLAND WATER TRANSPORT, HAS ASKED CHARGE' IF SURPLUS LST'S, WHICH BDG WANTS FOR CIVILIAN PASSENGER AND FREIGHT LINKS TO OFFSHORE ISLANDS, ARE AVAILABLE FROM USG OR U.S. COMMERCIAL SUPPLIERS.

2. HUQ EXPLAINED THAT MANY POPULOUS OFFSHORE ISLANDS IN THE BAY OF BENGAL ARE NOW SERIOUSLY ISOLATED FROM MAINLAND AND THAT INTEGRATION OF ISLANDERS INTO MAINLAND ECONOMY WOULD BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL. ALSO ISLANDS ARE ESPECIAWLY PRONE TO SOMETIMES DISASTROUS STORMS DURING MOOSON SEASON AND IMPROVED TRANSIT FACILITIES ARE GREATLY NEEDED FOH HUMANITARISN PURPOSES.

3. IF LST'S ARE AVAILABLE, HUQ SAID, THEY COULD BE CON-
VERTED FOR CIVILIAN PASSENGER AND LIGHT FREIGHT HAULING.
HE EMPHASIZED THAT VESSELS WOULD BE OPERATED BY A GOVERN-
MENT SHIPPING SERVICE UNDER JURISDICTION OF HIS MIN-
ISTRY AND WOULD HAVE NO SECURITY FUNCTION OR CONNECTION
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WITH THE BANGLADEFL NAVY.

4. HUQ INQUIRED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF A U.S. GRANT, BDG PURCHASE IF PRICE IS ATTRACTIVE, OR FINANCING BY A THIRD PARTY OR USAID.

5. WE INFORMED HUQ THAT IN ABSENCE OF A PRESIDENTIAL

DETERMINATION ON MILITARY SALES TO BANGLADESH, LST'S
COULD NOT BE MADE AVAILABLE IF U.S. JEGARDS VESSELS AS
MILITARY EQUIPMENT. AS FOR POSSIBLE USAID FINANCING,
A REQUEST FOR THIS FROM THE BDG'S MINISTRY OF PLANNING,
EXTERNAL RESOURCES DIVISION WOULD BE REQUIRED BEFORE WE
COULD ADDRESS THE QUESTION.

6. HUQ ASKED: (A) ARE LST'S AVAILABLE ON GOVERNMENT-
TO-GOVERNMENT BASIS ON CASH, LOAN OR GRANT TERMS?; (B)
IN VIEW OF INTENDED CIVILIAN USE AND ACQUISITION BY
CIVILIAN AGENCY, COULD THE VESSELS (ASSUMING THEY ARE
AVAILABLE) BE CLASSIFIED NON-MILITARY?; (C) WOULD
ACQUISITION FROM U.S. COMMERCIAL SOURCE RATHER THAN USG
AFFECT USG'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE VESSELS AS MILITARY
OR CIVILIAN EQUIPMENT, ASSUMING INTENDED CIVILIAN USE?

7. ACTION REQUESTED: BDG INTEREST IN LST'S, IN ADDITION
TO REQUESTS FOR HYDROGRAPHIC VESSELS AND TRANSFER OF HELI-
COPTERS FROM IRAN (REFTELS), MAY BE RAISED DURING ADMIRAL
WEISNER'S VISIT TO DACCA JANUARY 23-26. (HUQ, A
RETIRED NAVY CAPTAIN, WAS BANGLADESH'S FIRST CHIEF OF
NAVAL STAFF.) WE WOULD APPRECIATE GUIDANCE FOR RESPOND-
ING TO HIS QUESTIONS ON LST'S.
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